(a) whether Government have any plants to provide free legal assistance to women of Indian origin who are in distress or bad plight; and

(b) whether Government would also consider the plight of some women in South India, who were married to citizens of West Asian countries and later got divorced or were abandoned by their husbands?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) The Government has recently launched a scheme to provide legal and counselling assistance through Indian Missions abroad to Indian women who have been deserted or divorced within two years of the marriage by their overseas Indian spouses in the form of financial assistance on a case by case basis. The scheme will cover cases pertaining to USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and countries in the Gulf.

Indian medical practitioners in UK

1096. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether medical practitioners practicing in United Kingdom have to leave their jobs in view of a legislation enacted in that country giving preference to medical practitioners from the European Union;

(b) the essential features of the new legislation passed in the country;

(c) whether Government have decided to intervene in the matter and make a representation to Government of United Kingdom; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (d) The British Government has implemented new immigration and employment regulations on 7th March, 2006, under which all non-EU doctors will hereafter require a work permit to work in the UK. However, work permit will be given against specific vacancies for which suitable UK/EU doctors are not available. The new regulations abolished the Permit-Free Training (PFT) category through which most Indian Medical Graduates (IMG) worked in the UK. The new regulations were confirmed by an order of the British High Court on 9th February, 2007. The Indian High Commission had taken up with the Government of UK the issue of allowing the Indian doctors to apply for the first round of recruitment under the system of

current Modernising Medical Careers launched by UK Department of Health. The Department of Health has agreed to consider the request of keeping the first round open for Indian doctors. In the first round, NHS proposes to recruit around 10,000 doctors. Further efforts are on to ensure that IMGs are also allowed to appear unconditionally for the second round of recruitment that is likely to take place in April 2007.

Indian workers working abroad without registration

1097. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of migrated Indian workers working overseas without registration with Protector General of Emigration; and

(b) whether Government would bring a comprehensive legislation to prosecute the agencies/agents engaged in illegal migration?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) About 6.77 lakh Indian workers have taken emigration clearance from the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) during 2006, to work abroad. No record is maintained of persons working abroad who do not require such clearance of POEs.

(b) The Emigration Act, 1983, contains provisions for action against agencies/agents engaged in illegal migration. In cases involving registered recruiting agents, action is taken to suspend/cancel their registration certificate. Similar cases involving un-registered agents are reported to the local police authorities for prosecution.

Harassment of NRIs in Britain

†1098. SHRI MAHENDRA SAHNI: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that British Government are harassing Non-Resident Indians by bringing change in the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) rules;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.